

Behind the wheel...

Before You Get Behind the Wheel

It's your responsibility to ensure that the vehicle you are driving is:

Properly registered

- ▶ **Properly registered.** If the vehicle is registered in Virginia, plates must be displayed on the front and rear of the vehicle. Decals indicating the month and year that the registration expires must be placed in the designated areas on the plates (except for vehicles displaying permanent plates). You must have the vehicle registration card with you when operating the vehicle. You must also register your vehicle in your locality if required.

Insured

- ▶ **Insured** by a company authorized to do business in Virginia. If the vehicle is not insured, verify that the owner has paid the Uninsured Motor Vehicle Fee (UMVF). Vehicles registered in Virginia must remain insured during the entire registration period even if the vehicle is not driven or is inoperable.

If not insured and you have not paid the UMVF

If the vehicle is not insured and you have not paid the UMVF, you must cancel the registration and return the license plates to DMV immediately. Failure to cancel the registration will result in suspension of your driver's license.



If you purchase plates for a vehicle that is inoperable, you must have liability insurance at the time you purchase the plates or pay the UMVF. You must maintain insurance on the vehicle during the entire registration period even though it remains inoperable.

Inoperable vehicle

- ▶ **In good working order.** The vehicle must have a valid safety inspection sticker, license plates, and working brakes, safety belts, horn, lights, turn signals, mirrors and speedometer.

Section 2

Section 2: Behind the Wheel...

Tinted windows

If your vehicle has tinted windows check with the Virginia State Police to make sure it is in compliance with Virginia's sunshading specifications. DMV is authorized to issue waivers to individuals with medical conditions that require protection from sunlight or bright artificial light.

If insurance is not an option, you must pay the \$500 uninsured motor vehicle fee. It allows you to register your vehicle but does not provide insurance coverage.

If your vehicle becomes uninsured and you do not reinsure it or pay DMV the \$500 uninsured motor vehicle fee, you must cancel the registration and return the valid license plates to DMV immediately.

How you hold the wheel is important

Sit straight but relaxed. Place your hands on the steering wheel at the 8 o'clock and 4 o'clock positions. Hold the wheel with your fingers and thumbs. Avoid gripping it with your palms.

8 o'clock, 4 o'clock



Your Best Protection: Safety Belts, Air Bags and Child Safety Seats

Wearing safety belts can double your chances of surviving a crash and more than double your chances of avoiding serious injury. Virginia's safety belt law requires drivers and front seat passengers to use safety belts when traveling in a motor vehicle that is equipped with or required to be equipped with safety belts.

**Safety belts
save lives
and help to
avoid
serious
injury**

Under Virginia law, the driver and all front seat passengers must wear a safety belt. A driver transporting anyone through age 15 must ensure that the child is properly secured in a safety belt, booster seat or child safety seat no matter where the child is seated in the vehicle.

Remember to wear your lap belt low on your lap and against your thighs. Wear your shoulder belt over your shoulder and across your chest. Never wear your shoulder belt behind your back or under your arm. Your shoulder and lap belts should be snug without any slack. Pregnant women are much safer if buckled up by wearing the belt as low on the pelvis as possible.

**Wear them
correctly**

Air bags when used properly with safety belts, cushion occupants as they move forward in a front-end crash. By providing a cushion, the air bag keeps the occupant's head, neck and chest from hitting the steering column or dashboard.

Virginia Insurance Laws

If you drive in Virginia without liability coverage on your vehicle, you face a \$500 fine, suspension of your driver's license and vehicle registration, plus higher insurance premiums for the next three years.

Inoperable vehicle

During the entire registration period, your vehicle must be covered by a liability policy issued by a company licensed to do business in Virginia - even if the vehicle is inoperable or not being used. Insurance companies notify DMV electronically when coverage is started or canceled.

If your vehicle is equipped with air bags,

- ▶ Always buckle up and have all passengers in the vehicle buckle up.
- ▶ Move your seat back so that you are at least ten inches from the steering wheel.
- ▶ If your steering wheel is adjustable, tilt it downward. This points the air bag toward your chest instead of your head and neck.
- ▶ Children ages 12 and under are safer buckled up in the back seat.
- ▶ Never place a rear-facing infant seat in the front seat if the air bag is turned on.

For more information about air bags, including applying for an on/off switch, contact the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) on the web at www.nhtsa.dot.gov or toll-free hotline at 1-800-424-9393.

Child safety seats

Child Safety Seats: Securing a child in a correctly installed child safety seat can significantly reduce the possibility of death or injury.

All children under age six must be properly secured in a child safety seat or booster seat when riding in a vehicle manufactured after January 1, 1968. Virginia law requires all children age six through age 15 to be properly secured in an approved child safety seat, booster seat or safety belt, no matter where the child is seated in the vehicle.

The driver is responsible for making sure that children are properly secured. If you are convicted of violating the child restraint law, you will be fined \$50.00.

Tips for Traveling With Children

- ▶ Always secure children under age six in an approved child safety seat or booster seat, even if you are making only a short trip.
- ▶ The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends restraining children by using a booster seat until they reach age eight.
- ▶ Children from birth to age 12 months ride facing the rear.
- ▶ Children ages one through five ride facing forward in a child safety seat or booster seat.
- ▶ The safest place to install a child safety seat is in the center of the back seat. NEVER place a rear-facing infant seat in the front seat of a vehicle with a passenger-side air bag.
- ▶ Numerous child safety seat checks are held in localities across Virginia. Attend one of these checks to make sure that your child's safety seat is installed correctly.
- ▶ Never hold a child in your lap. In a crash, the child may be crushed between your body and the dashboard.
- ▶ Make sure that all car doors are securely closed and locked before driving. Don't allow children to play with door handles or locks. If you must open a door, pull the vehicle off the road and come to a complete stop.
- ▶ Never allow children to ride in the luggage area of hatchbacks, station wagons or vans.
- ▶ It is illegal to transport children under age 16 in the bed of a pick-up truck, even if equipped with a camper shell.
- ▶ Never leave a hatchback open when a child is riding in the back seat.
- ▶ Children age six through age 15 must be properly secured in an approved safety seat, booster seat or safety belt no matter where the child is seated in the vehicle.

Good Driving Practices

Use the three-second rule to determine if you are far enough behind the vehicle ahead of you.

Here's how it works.

- ▶ Watch the vehicle ahead pass a fixed point, such as an overpass, sign, fence, corner or other marker.
- ▶ Begin counting off the seconds it takes you to reach the same place in the road.
- ▶ If you reach the mark before you have counted off three seconds, you're following too closely. Slow down and increase your following distance.
- ▶ Remember, the three-second rule applies only in good weather and depends on the condition of your vehicle and the road. In bad weather conditions, heavy traffic, poor pavement or if your vehicle is in poor condition, add extra seconds to the three-second rule.

Scanning

When driving, we gather 90 percent of the information about the road and our surroundings through our eyes. Scanning means looking at the entire scene for anything that might come into your path. As you scan the road, avoid a fixed stare. Keep your eyes moving and learn to read the road. Look ahead, to the sides and behind you.

When driving in rural areas, watch for hidden intersections and driveways, curves, hills and different road conditions. Watch for other vehicles, especially trucks, oversize and slow-moving farm vehicles and bicycles.

Check from left to right before entering an intersection. Whenever you reach a place in the road where other cars, people or animals may cross your path, look to both sides to be sure that the way is clear. These include intersections, crosswalks, shopping centers, construction areas and playgrounds. At any intersection, look to the left first, since cars coming from the left will be closer to you. Then look to the right and take one more quick look to the left before you drive through.

Check from left to right

Look behind. Use your rear-view mirror to check the traffic behind you frequently, about every 10 seconds. This will alert you if someone is moving up too quickly or tailgating you. Check the traffic behind you when changing lanes, backing up, slowing down quickly or driving down a long, steep hill. But, don't take your eyes off the road for more than an instant.

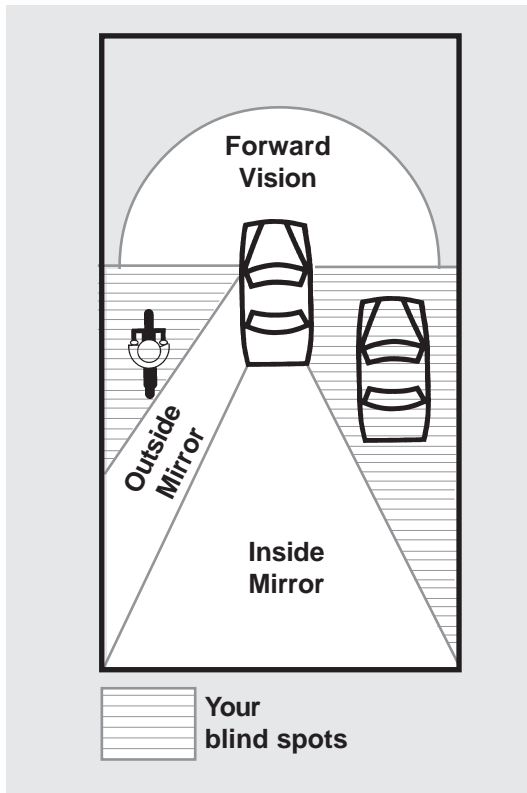
Look behind

Scan ahead and to the sides

Scan ahead and to the sides. Looking ahead will help you see things early and will allow you more time to react. Expert drivers try to focus their eyes 20 to 30 seconds ahead. In the city, that equals approximately one block. Avoid staring at the middle of the road, however. Scan from side to side, checking for directional signs, cars or people that might be in the road by the time you reach them.

Watch for clues

Watch for clues in the road. Look for exhaust smoke, brake or back-up lights and turned wheels on vehicles. Clues like these indicate that the vehicles may pull into your path. Watch for pedestrians, bicyclists and other slow moving vehicles that may be in the road ahead.

Blind spots

Blind spots are danger areas which cannot be seen in the mirrors on either or both sides of the vehicle.

Quickly turn your head to check for other vehicles in your blind spots before making any sideways movement, such as changing lanes or passing another vehicle.

Avoid driving in someone else's blind spot. This can be just as dangerous as not checking your own. Speed up or drop back; but, don't stay in the other driver's blind spot.

Sharing the Road

Drivers of passenger vehicles share the road with many other users: pedestrians, bicyclists, moped and motorcycle riders, trucks and buses, recreational vehicles and other passenger vehicles of all shapes and sizes. It is your responsibility to adjust your driving to avoid other drivers' mistakes and assure everyone's safety.

Pedestrians: Generally, there are three types of pedestrians most often involved in accidents: children, the elderly and adults under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

- ▶ Be careful around schools, playgrounds and in residential areas where small children may be playing or crossing the street.
- ▶ Look out for the elderly, who may have poor vision and hearing. Remember that they and people with disabilities will move slowly. Be aware of blind pedestrians crossing the street. Blind pedestrians usually carry a white cane or use a guide dog.
- ▶ Be especially aware of pedestrians when making a right or left turn on red. They have the right-of-way. Allow pedestrians to completely cross the street before beginning your turn.
- ▶ Be alert for pedestrians at all times. Slow down and be prepared to stop. Always yield the right-of-way.

Bicyclists: Bicycles are considered vehicles and have the same rights-of-way as motor vehicles. Bicyclists are also expected to obey the same traffic rules and regulations as vehicle drivers; however, many are children who may not know or obey the rules. Slow down when you approach bicyclists. Give them plenty of room when passing and be prepared to stop suddenly. Look for bicycles on all public roads except where prohibited by a sign.

Mopeds: Under Virginia law, a moped is a bicycle-like device with pedals and a helper motor. The motor cannot be rated at more than two horsepower or enable the moped to travel more than 30 MPH. Moped riders must be at least 16 years old and must obey all rules of the road. Moped riders must carry some form of identification that includes name, address and date of birth.

As a driver, treat moped riders with the same care given to any other vehicle driver.

Section 2: Behind the Wheel...

Although you do not need a driver's license to operate a moped, you may not operate a moped if you have been declared a habitual offender and your license is suspended or revoked for driving while intoxicated.

When overtaking a bicycle, moped, or power-assisted bicycle or other device, you must be at least two feet to the left of the vehicle when you pass. You must also pass at a reasonable speed.

Motorcycles: Approximately half of all fatal motorcycle crashes involve automobiles. Most of these crashes are caused by the motorist's failure to see a motorcycle in traffic.

- ▶ Look for motorcyclists. In more than half of all crashes involving motorcycles and automobiles, the other driver didn't see the motorcycle until it was too late. Motorists are conditioned to look for four-wheeled vehicles; but they don't expect to see two-wheeled vehicles. A motorcycle's small size also makes it difficult to see.
- ▶ Check your blind spots. A motorcycle's small size allows it to slip into your blind spot easily. Always check for motorcycles before you pull out, change lanes, turn, back up or proceed through an intersection.
- ▶ Never tailgate a motorcycle (or any other vehicle). Allow yourself plenty of braking distance by adding an extra second to the three-second rule. In inclement weather, double this distance.
- ▶ Anticipate the motorcyclist's movements. Although a motorcycle occupies only four feet of the lane, the rider will use the entire lane as traffic situations and road conditions change. A slight change or debris on the road surface can be a

major obstacle for a motorcyclist. Expect the motorcycle to make sudden moves within the lane. Never drive in the motorcyclist's lane.

- ▶ Yield to motorcycles. The small size of a motorcycle can cause you to misjudge the motorcycle's speed and distance. Before pulling out into traffic, check twice for motorcycles and use extra caution before you pull out in front of one.

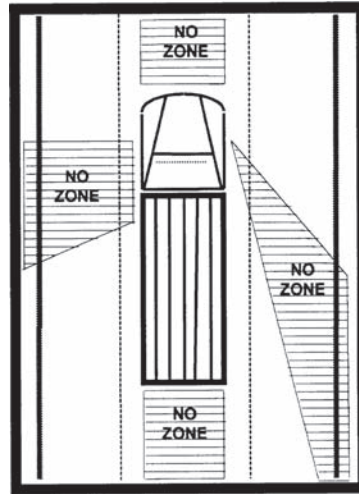


Low Speed Vehicles: These electrically powered four-wheel vehicles have a maximum speed ranging from 21 to 25 MPH. Low speed vehicles may be operated on public highways with speed limits of 35 MPH or less by licensed drivers or learner's permit holders accompanied by a licensed driver.

Low speed vehicles must comply with all federal safety standards and must meet Virginia's requirements for passenger vehicle registration and insurance coverage. Golf carts are not classified as low speed vehicles.

Trucks, Tractor-Trailers and RVs:

Trucks, tractor-trailers, buses and recreational vehicles (RVs)-- including motor homes, campers and travel trailers--are longer, higher and wider than other vehicles. They accelerate slowly and require greater stopping and turning distances. Plus, there are danger areas around these vehicles where crashes are more likely to occur. These areas are called No-Zones. No-Zones on the side, front and rear also include blind spots where your car disappears from the driver's view. Learning the No-Zones can save your life!



- ▶ **Side No-Zones:** Trucks, tractor-trailers, buses and RVs have big No-Zones on both sides which are dangerous because these vehicles must make wide turns. These No-Zones or blind spots are much larger than your car's blind spots. If you can't see the driver's face in his side view mirror, then he can't see you.
- ▶ **Rear No-Zone:** Trucks, tractor-trailers, buses and RVs have huge No-Zones directly behind them. The driver can't see your car behind his vehicle and you can't see what's happening in traffic ahead of his vehicle. If the truck, bus or RV brakes or stops suddenly, you have no place to go and could crash into the vehicle's rear-end. Always maintain a safe following distance.
- ▶ **Front No-Zone:** You could get rear-ended by a truck, bus or RV if you cut in front too soon after passing the vehicle. If you cut in front and then suddenly slow down, truck, bus and RV drivers are forced to slam on their brakes. These vehicles need nearly twice the time and room to stop as cars. A truck and its tow vehicle may be as long as 65 feet and it may take you more than half a mile of clear road to pass. When passing, look

for the entire front of the truck in your rearview mirror before pulling in front. And then, don't slow down!

- ▶ **Wide Turns:** Trucks, buses and RVs sometimes need to swing wide to the left or right in order to safely make a turn. They can't see the cars directly behind or beside them. In fact, their blind spots may stretch up to 20 feet in front of the cab and approximately 200 feet behind the truck. Trying to squeeze between a truck, bus or RV and the curb or another vehicle is an invitation to disaster.

Maintaining a Space Cushion

Space around your vehicle gives you time to react in emergencies and avoid a collision. Create a space cushion around your vehicle by staying in the middle of your lane. Make sure there is enough room ahead of your vehicle and behind it for other vehicles to pass or stop safely.

- ▶ **Help the driver** behind you maintain a safe following distance by maintaining a steady speed. Use a hand signal or tap your brakes to let the driver behind you know in advance when you plan to slow down or stop.

Section 2: Behind the Wheel...

- ▶ **If the driver behind you** is following too closely, do not brake suddenly. If possible, move over to another lane. Or, when the way ahead is clear, flash your brake lights and slow down. This should encourage the tailgater to pass you.
- ▶ **In city traffic**, increase the amount of space between your vehicle and the vehicle ahead.
- ▶ **Avoid driving** in another driver's blind spot.
- ▶ **Once you've established** a space cushion, if a vehicle cuts into the space ahead of you, just slow down and re-establish a safe following distance.
- ▶ **Increase your following distance** when driving behind a large vehicle that blocks your vision. You should also increase your following distance when driving in bad weather, heavy traffic or when exiting an expressway. Increase your following distance if you are following a motorcycle or being tailgated.

If you are traveling slower than the traffic around you on a multi-lane highway, drive in the right-hand lane.

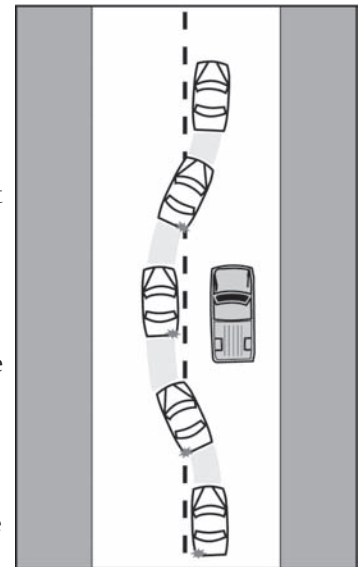
Changing Lanes

Before changing lanes, check your side and rearview mirrors for traffic approaching you from behind. Then, give a turn signal to communicate your intention to change lanes. Check for other drivers who also may be moving into the same lane. Just before you begin moving into the other lane, quickly glance over your shoulder and check for any vehicles that may be in your blind spot.

Whether you are changing lanes, passing, entering or exiting an expressway, always use your turn signals and check traffic to the rear and sides. When driving on a multi-lane highway, stay in the right-hand lane if you are driving slower than the traffic around you.

When passing another vehicle:

- ▶ Check the traffic ahead of you, behind you and in your blind spot before you attempt to pass. Signal and then accelerate to pass. Return to the right lane as soon as you can see the front of the passed vehicle in your rearview mirror.
- ▶ It is against the law to exceed the speed limit as you pass.
- ▶ Complete the pass before you reach a No Passing zone. If you're still in the left lane when you reach the zone, you're breaking the law.
- ▶ You may pass on the right if the vehicle you are passing has signaled and is making a left turn. Be cautious because the vehicle you are passing may be blocking your view or blocking the view of other drivers. You may not pass on the right if you must drive off the pavement or main portion of the roadway to get around the other vehicle.



- ▶ When approaching or passing a person riding a bicycle, moped, or power-assisted bicycle or other device, pass at least two feet to the left of the vehicle and at a reasonable speed.

When being passed,

- ▶ don't speed up. Maintain a steady speed or slow down.

Passing is prohibited:

- ▶ on hills, curves, at intersections or railroad crossings, except on roads with two or more lanes of traffic moving in the same direction;
- ▶ off the pavement or shoulder of the road;
- ▶ when a school bus is stopped to load or unload passengers on a public road (unless a physical barrier or unpaved median separates traffic going in either direction) or on a private road; and,
- ▶ whenever a solid line marks the left side of your lane.

Backing

The most common mistake that drivers make when backing is failing to look both ways behind them. Mirrors do not give you a full view. To see as much as possible, turn your body and head to the right and look out through the rear window. Back up slowly and check for pedestrians and approaching traffic by glancing quickly to either side.

Visibility

On a dry road, with good tires and brakes, it takes about 265 feet for a passenger vehicle traveling at 55 MPH to stop. If you can't see that far ahead, then you cannot drive safely at that speed. Adjust your speed for hills, curves, intersections or anywhere that visibility may be limited. In other words, slow down. Night driving is especially dangerous. Under normal conditions, your headlights let you see only about 350 feet ahead.

You will also need to adjust your speed when driving in the rain, fog or snow. If you cannot see more than 100 feet ahead, you cannot drive safely at any speed. Consider getting off the road until the weather breaks.

Hazardous Conditions

Driving becomes hazardous when visibility is reduced or when the road surface is covered with rain, snow or ice. Reducing your speed should be your first response to decreased visibility and dangerous road conditions. Increase your space cushion by doubling your normal following distance from three seconds to six seconds (refer to Maintaining a Space Cushion for more information). Turn on your headlights.

Night Driving

At sunset, as soon as light begins to fade, turn on your headlights to make your vehicle more visible to others. You must use headlights from sunset to sunrise. In inclement weather such as rain, fog and snow, you must use your headlights whenever you use your wipers.

Use low beams when driving in cities and towns, except on streets where there is no lighting. Switch to low beams whenever you meet oncoming traffic to avoid blinding the other driver. When following, use low beams whenever you are within 200 feet of the vehicle ahead.

Use high-beam headlights on highways when no other vehicle is approaching within 500 feet. If the high beams of an oncoming car are not dimmed, avoid looking directly at the bright lights. Glance toward the side of the road, then look quickly ahead to determine the other vehicle's position. Keep doing this until you have passed the other vehicle. Even though the other driver does not dim his headlights, do not retaliate by turning on your high-beam headlights.

Section 2: Behind the Wheel...

Fog

Fog reflects light and can reflect your own headlights back into your eyes. Use low beam headlights only and look for road edge markings to guide you. Even light fog reduces visibility and your ability to judge distances, so slow down.

Rain

Driving in heavy rain can be as hazardous as driving in fog, especially if the wind is blowing. Other vehicles to the rear and in blind spot areas are especially difficult to see through rain-spattered windows.

Use your low-beam headlights to see and be seen. Wait a short time after the rain begins before using your windshield wipers because the blades may smear.

Be extra careful during the first half hour after rain begins. Grime and oil on the road surface mix with water to make the road slippery.

Snow

Before you start driving, remove snow and ice from your entire car, including the roof, hood and rear of the vehicle. Be sure to clear all your windows, side view mirrors and front and rear lights of snow or ice so you can see and communicate with other drivers.

Equip your car with all-weather snow tires or chains to help prevent skidding and reduce stopping distance.

Slow down before stopping or turning. Driving on packed snow is similar to driving on ice. When you brake, apply the brakes gently.

On slippery surfaces, you have the most traction and control when the front tires are rolling. Therefore, your vehicle will respond more effectively to steering than braking.

Watch for ice on bridges and in shady areas. Bridges freeze before other road surfaces.



How many feet does that equal?

Sometimes it's difficult to judge distance. Here are a few comparisons to help you.

- ▶ 100 feet roughly equals the length of two tractor-trailers parked one behind the other.
- ▶ 250 feet roughly equals the height of a 25-story building.
- ▶ 350 feet is slightly longer than the playing area of a football field.

Communicating With Other Motorists

Lights

Virginia law requires motorists to use headlights during inclement weather such as rain, fog, snow or sleet when visibility is reduced to 500 feet. You must use your headlights whenever you use your windshield wipers as a result of bad weather. Refer to Hazardous Conditions for more information.

Be seen in inclement weather

Turn Signals

Develop a good habit

When you plan to make a turn or to enter or exit a highway, first give the proper turn signal, which is required by law. Develop a good habit and use turn signals or hand signals even if no other traffic is on the road. Signal when making turns, changing lanes, entering or exiting highways and always let the other driver know what you intend to do.

3 or 4 seconds

Signal three or four seconds before you change direction so other drivers will have time to react. If you plan to turn after clearing an intersection, don't signal until you reach the intersection; otherwise, drivers on the road ahead may pull out in front of you. After you complete your move, be sure the turn signal stops flashing. Remember, always signal before changing lanes.

If the speed limit is more than 35 MPH, signal at least 100 feet before you reach the turning point.

For speeds less than 35 MPH, signal at least 50 feet in advance.

Hand Signals



Left Turn



Right Turn



Slow or Stop

Dangerous Driving Behaviors

Aggressive Driving

This dangerous driving behavior is defined by Virginia law as the intent to harass, intimidate, injure or obstruct another person while committing one or more traffic offenses such as failure to stop or yield the right-of-way, evasion of a traffic control device or failure to give way to an overtaking vehicle.



When they're behind the wheel of their vehicles, these high-risk drivers take out their frustrations on other motorists. Their frustration level runs high while their concern for fellow motorists runs low. They run stop signs and red lights, speed, tailgate, weave in and out of traffic, pass on the right (including on the shoulder and unpaved portions of the road), make improper and unsafe lane changes, make hand and facial gestures, scream, honk and flash their lights.

Protect yourself. If you see an aggressive driver, stay out of the way. Don't challenge the aggressive driver by speeding up or trying to out-maneuver him. Avoid eye contact and ignore his gestures and shouting.

Remember, if you are convicted of aggressive driving, your license could be suspended for ten days or for as long as six months.

Distracted Driving

Driver distraction is reaching epidemic proportions in drivers of all ages, but especially in young, inexperienced drivers. Consider all the things inside and outside the vehicle that can distract the driver. A university study conducted in 2002 found that looking at crashes and vehicle breakdowns, driver fatigue and looking at scenery were the three leading causes of distracted driving in Virginia. Other distractions included passengers and children,

Section 2: Behind the Wheel...

adjusting the radio or changing the CD player, using a cell phone, eating and drinking and adjusting vehicle controls.

Annually, driver distraction accounts for roughly 13 percent of all traffic crashes in Virginia. Why is distracted driving so deadly? Because while the driver is distracted, the vehicle moves into a high-risk situation. The driver loses precious seconds before recognizing the situation and making an emergency maneuver. Young drivers are even more susceptible because they often over-correct and because they lack experience in controlling a vehicle during an emergency situation. Don't let this happen to you. Take the following precautions.

- ▶ Keep your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel at all times.
- ▶ Set or adjust the controls on the vehicle and other devices as soon as you get in the car and before you begin driving.
- ▶ Keep your body alert; sit straight, but relaxed. Look in the direction that you want to go.
- ▶ Avoid using a cell phone.
- ▶ Anticipate the traffic and environment around you by scanning ahead and checking your rearview mirrors.
- ▶ Maintain the speed limit; but, reduce your speed and increase your following distance in bad weather and heavy traffic.
- ▶ Always fasten your safety belt and make sure everyone in your vehicle is securely buckled up.

Drinking and Driving

Driving Under the Influence (DUI):

Legally, you are considered to be driving under the influence if your blood alcohol content (BAC) is 0.08 percent or higher. If your driving is impaired, you can be convicted of driving under the influence with a BAC lower than 0.08 percent. If your driving is impaired because you are

under the influence of any drug, you may face the same penalties as driving under the influence of alcohol.

Administrative License Suspension (ALS):

For a first DUI offense and/or breath test refusal, your driver's license will be automatically suspended for seven days if your BAC is 0.08 percent or higher. For a second DUI offense and/or breath test refusal, your license will be automatically suspended for 60 days or until you go to trial, whichever comes first. For a third DUI offense and/or breath test refusal, your license will be automatically suspended until you go to trial. Conviction of a DUI offense will result in suspension of your driver's license and other penalties in addition to the administrative suspension.

Open Container:

You may be charged with drinking while operating a motor vehicle if you are stopped by law enforcement and you have an open container of alcohol in the passenger area and the contents have been partially removed, and you exhibit signs that you have been drinking. The passenger area means the area designed to seat the driver and passengers and any area within the driver's reach, including an unlocked glove compartment.

Zero Tolerance:

If you are under age 21, you cannot purchase, possess or consume alcohol. If you are convicted of driving after illegally consuming alcohol, and your BAC was at least 0.02 percent and less than 0.08 percent, you can be fined up to \$500, have your driver's license suspended for six months, and face a possible jail term.

Persons under age 21 who drive under the influence of drugs or with a blood alcohol content of 0.08 percent or higher are subject to the same penalties as persons age 21 or older.

Transporting Children While Under the Influence:

Conviction of any DUI offense involving a juvenile passenger (age 17 or younger) in the vehicle at the time of the offense carries an additional mandatory five-day jail term in addition to all other fines and jail sentences. You may also be assessed an

additional fine of at least \$500 and up to \$1,000. A second DUI offense with a juvenile (age 17 or younger) in the vehicle carries an additional 80-hour community service requirement in addition to all other fines and jail sentences.

Vehicle Impoundment:

Your vehicle will be impounded immediately for 30 days if you are caught driving after your license has been suspended for an alcohol-related offense. The court can impound the vehicle for an additional 90 days if you are convicted.

Penalties for Persons Under Age 21 Possessing and Consuming Alcohol:

If you're under age 21 and you possess and/or consume alcohol, you face a fine ranging from \$500 to \$2,500, up to 12 months in jail and a suspended license or denial of license.

Penalties for Possessing Alcoholic Beverages at Public Schools:

Drinking or possessing alcoholic beverages on public school grounds can result in a fine of up to \$1,000 and up to six months in jail regardless of your age.

Penalties for Providing Alcoholic Beverages:

If you provide or sell alcoholic beverages to a person under age 21, you are subject to a fine up to \$2,500, 12 months in jail, and suspension of your driver's license for up to one year. These same penalties apply if you assist someone under age 21 in obtaining or purchasing alcohol.

Misrepresentation of Age:

If you are under age 21 and you use or attempt to use an altered, fictitious or simulated document or student ID to establish a false age in an attempt to consume alcohol or purchase alcoholic beverages, you will

- ▶ be fined at least \$500;
- ▶ be required to perform at least 50 hours of community service;
- ▶ face up to 12 months in jail; and,

- ▶ be subject to suspension of your driver's license for up to 12 months.

If The Police Stop You

If the police have probable cause to stop you and suspect that you have been drinking or using drugs, they will ask you to take a breath test. This test analyzes the amount of alcohol in your body. Under implied consent laws, if you operate a motor vehicle on Virginia's public roads, you agree to take a chemical test upon request.

If you are involved in a motor vehicle crash and a law enforcement officer has probable cause, you can be arrested for DUI within three hours of the crash without a warrant and at any location.

Alcohol and You

Researchers estimate that between the hours of 10 PM and 2 AM one out of every ten drivers is intoxicated. More than one-third of these drivers have been drinking at someone else's home. Nearly 50 percent of the drivers arrested for driving under the influence (DUI) are social to moderate drinkers. Don't think that it won't happen to you. In your lifetime, there's a 50-50 chance that you'll be involved in an alcohol-related crash.

Just one alcoholic drink can affect your driving ability because even a small amount of alcohol affects the brain's higher functions - particularly vision, judgment, and coordination.

Because alcohol affects your judgment and driving ability, your chances of being in a crash are seven times greater if you drive after drinking than if you drive sober.

A 12-ounce glass of beer, a five-ounce glass of wine and a shot of liquor have similar amounts of alcohol.

Only time can decrease intoxication. Coffee, cold showers or exercise will not have a sobering effect.

Avoiding the Risks

Alcohol-related crashes are not accidents. They can be prevented! If you are planning a night on the town, decide before you start drinking that you are not going to drive. Remember, alcohol affects judgment. It's a lot more difficult to make the decision not to drive after one or two drinks.

Drive to social events in groups of two or more and have the driver agree not to drink.

Alcohol and drugs: Combining alcohol with other drugs usually multiplies the effects of both and can have a disastrous effect on your ability to drive. One drink taken when you are taking another drug—even an aspirin, simple allergy or cold remedy—could have the same effect on your driving ability as consuming several alcoholic beverages.

Almost any drug can reduce your ability to drive safely. It's not just illegal drugs that cause problems. Many over-the-counter medications and prescription drugs for headaches, hay fever, colds, allergies or nervous conditions can cause drowsiness and dizziness. This includes syrups, drops, sprays, pills and tablets. They often affect driver alertness and slow reaction time.

Read the label before taking any drug or medicine. Look for warnings about side effects. If you're uncertain about the effects of a drug, ask your pharmacist or doctor for advice. Remember that, while the effects may vary among users, no drug is harmless. Taking any drug against medical direction or without a doctor's supervision is dangerous.

Rules of the Road

Speed Limits

A speed limit is the maximum legal speed you can travel on a road under ideal conditions. You may drive slower than the posted speed, but it is illegal to drive any faster. By law, you must drive slower if conditions make the posted speed unsafe.

It is illegal to use a radar detector in Virginia. However, you may legally possess one if the device has no power source and no one in the car can access it.

Maximum speed limit for passenger vehicles and motorcycles (unless posted otherwise)	
Type of highway or zone	Limit
Interstate highways in designated rural areas	65 MPH
Interstate highways in areas not designated as rural	55 MPH
Limited access and non-limited access highways	55 MPH
Secondary routes which include all public roads and streets not designated as part of the interstate or primary system	55 MPH
School, business and residential zones (You are required to travel 25 MPH in a school zone only when indicated by a sign or signal. Otherwise, maintain the posted speed.)	25 MPH

Stopping

You must always stop your vehicle:

when approaching from any direction on a public or private road a stopped school bus with flashing red lights and extended stop sign. Stop and remain stopped until all children are clear and the bus moves again. If you are traveling on the opposite side of a divided highway separated by a physical barrier or unpaved median area, you are not required to stop.

before the crosswalk at all stop signs, red traffic lights and flashing red signals.

when entering a street or crossing over a sidewalk from a driveway, alley, building or parking lot.

at railroad crossings with flashing signals or flaggers.

when signaled by flaggers at construction sites.

for blind persons attempting to cross a street.

at the direction of a police officer.

at the scene of a crash in which you are involved.

Both **reaction distance** and **braking distance** are affected by weather, visibility and your mental and physical condition. Braking distance is further affected by the speed at which your vehicle is traveling, the condition of your brakes and tires and the pavement condition. For example, wet pavement can double your braking distance.

When driving on wet roads, reduce your speed by one-third. For example, slow down from 55 MPH to 35 MPH. When driving on packed snow, reduce your speed by one-half.

Two factors determine the distance that it takes to stop your vehicle:

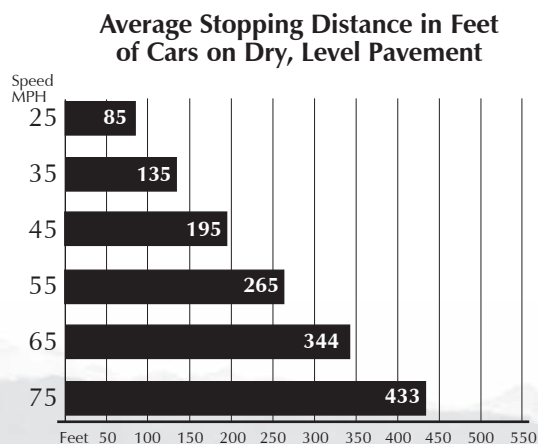
Reaction distance:

The distance your vehicle travels between the time you recognize a problem and the time you apply the brake.

Plus

Braking distance:

The distance your car travels after you apply the brakes and before the car stops.



Source: Code of Virginia § 46.2-880

Section 2: Behind the Wheel...

No matter how quickly you react, on the average, it takes 344 feet--more than the length of a football field--to stop an automobile going 65 MPH on a dry, level, hard-surface highway. It's not a matter of luck or skill; it's a law of physics. The chart on the preceding page gives you average stopping distances for automobiles on dry level pavement.

If your vehicle is equipped with antilock brakes, be sure that you understand how they work. Check your owner's manual and practice braking before you go out on the road. Remember, never pump antilock brakes.

Right-of-Way

When two vehicles approach an intersection not controlled by traffic lights or signs, neither vehicle has the right-of-way. Generally, Virginia law states that when two or more vehicles approach an uncontrolled intersection from different directions at the same time, the driver on the LEFT must yield to the driver on the right.

If the traffic lights at an intersection are not functioning, all vehicles approaching the intersection must stop. The driver on the left must yield to the driver on the right.

The law does not give the right-of-way to anyone. It only states which driver must yield to another.

Yield also means to stop if you cannot merge safely into the flow of traffic.

Emergency Vehicles

When approaching a stopped emergency vehicle, you must change lanes, where reasonable. If changing lanes is unreasonable or unsafe, you must proceed with caution.

Violations can result in court suspension of your driver's license and demerit points on your driving record.

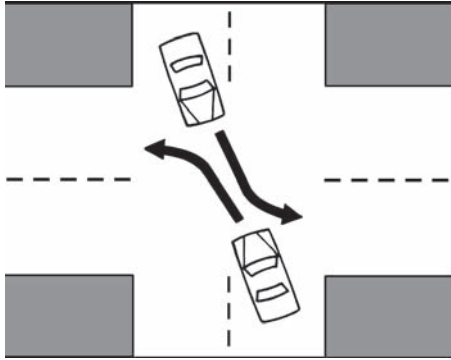
Additionally,

- ▶ You may not park within 500 feet of where fire trucks or equipment are stopped answering an alarm.
- ▶ You must yield the right-of-way to police, fire, rescue vehicles and ambulances using a siren, flashing lights or both.
- ▶ Never follow any emergency vehicle closer than 500 feet.
- ▶ When police, fire and rescue vehicles or ambulances approach you using a siren, flashing light or both, you must immediately yield the right-of-way. Pull over to the right edge of the road and stop until the emergency vehicle has passed. Don't follow any emergency vehicle any closer than 500 feet.
- ▶ Regardless of your direction, on an undivided highway, you must pull over to the edge of the road and allow an emergency vehicle to pass.

At uncontrolled intersections:

- ▶ Drivers entering an interstate from an entrance ramp must yield the right-of-way to traffic already on the highway.
- ▶ Drivers entering any intersection or traffic circle must yield to traffic already in it.
- ▶ From a private road or driveway, you must stop before crossing a sidewalk or entering a public street. You must yield to all oncoming traffic and pedestrians.

- ▶ When two vehicles are approaching each other and signaling to turn left, both vehicles should take the inside path, the lane closest to the center. They will complete the turn by turning in front of each other.



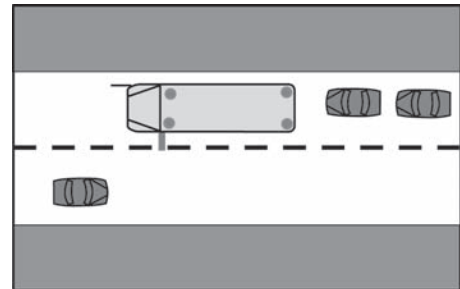
- ▶ You must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians who are crossing a street within a clearly marked crosswalk or at an intersection.
- ▶ You must always yield to visually handicapped pedestrians who are crossing a public street or highway. Visually handicapped pedestrians usually carry a white cane or are aided by a guide dog.
- ▶ You must yield to funeral processions. Do not cut through, join or interfere with a funeral procession. Unless accompanied or led by a police escort, the lead vehicle in a funeral procession must obey all traffic signs and signals. Other drivers in the procession may follow carefully without stopping and may use hazard lights (flashers) to indicate they are in the procession.
- ▶ You must yield to all military convoys. Never cut through or join a military convoy.
- ▶ Police officers directing traffic should be obeyed over all other signs or signals.

Remember that turns on red are especially hazardous to pedestrians. Regardless of who has the right-of-way, avoid conflict with pedestrians and permit them to cross the street safely.

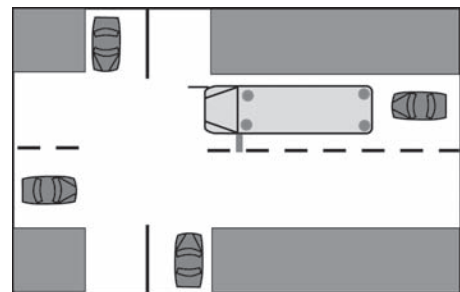


In illustration, the shaded vehicle must stop and remain stopped until all children are clear of the roadway and the bus moves again.

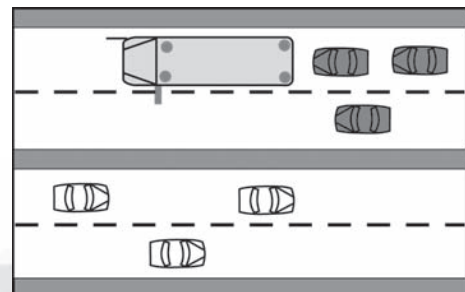
- ▶ When approaching a school bus with flashing signals or flashing signals and an extended stop sign on a public or private road, you must stop and remain stopped until all children are clear of the roadway and the bus moves again.



- ▶ You must also stop if the bus is loading or unloading children and the signal devices are not functioning properly.



- ▶ You do not have to stop, however, if you are traveling in the opposite direction on roadways separated by a physical barrier or unpaved median area.



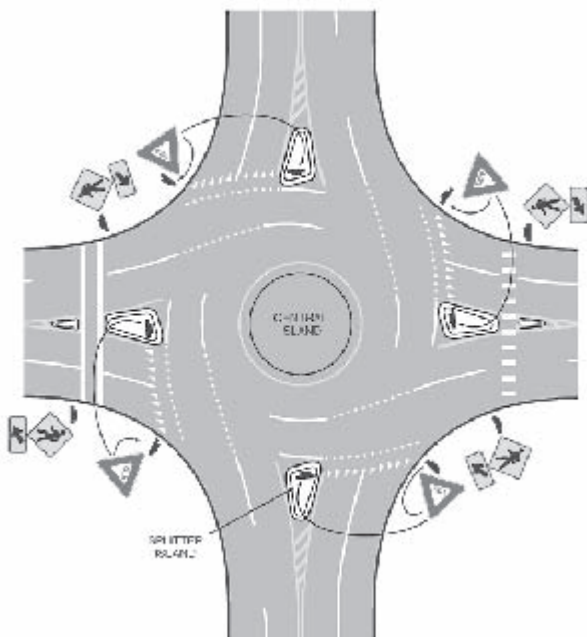
Circular Intersections

Roundabouts, rotaries, traffic circles, and circular residential traffic calming designs are intersections that are controlled by a circular island in the center. Circular intersections may have one or more lanes. Entering traffic must yield the right-of-way to circulating traffic. Each road approaching the circular intersection is marked with a yield sign and may also have yield line markings on the pavement.

Circular intersections are easy to use. Simply position your vehicle correctly and use your turn signals to indicate where you want to go.

When approaching a circular intersection, slow down. You must yield to traffic already in the intersection.

Unless signs direct you otherwise, if you plan to turn right, stay to the right as you enter the roundabout. If you plan to go straight, you may stay in either lane (if it is a dual lane roundabout). If you plan to turn left, stay to the left as you enter the circular intersection.



U-Turns

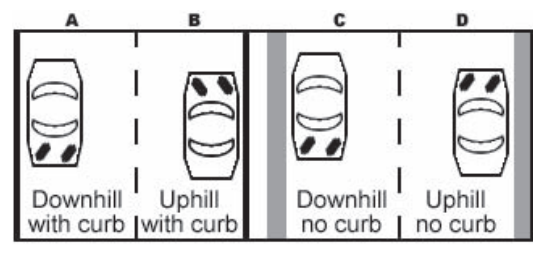
U-turns are not legal everywhere. So before you make a U-turn, check for signs prohibiting them. In business districts, cities and towns, U-turns are allowed only at intersections. Never make a U-turn on an expressway. When making a U-turn, give a left-turn signal, stop, check for approaching traffic. Proceed into the outside or right hand lane traveling in the opposite direction.

Parking

When parking on a public road, move as far from traffic as possible. If you park on a road-side shoulder, pull as far on to it as possible. If you park next to a curb, pull close to it. You may not park more than one foot from the curb. Always park on the right side of the roadway unless it is a one-way street.

Parking on hills

When parking on a hill with a curb, turn the front wheels of your vehicle to prevent it from rolling into the street. Refer to illustrations A and B. If there is no curb, turn the front wheels so that if the vehicle rolls, the rear of the vehicle will roll away from traffic. Refer to illustrations C and D.



You may not park:

- ▶ beside another parked vehicle (double parking);
- ▶ on crosswalks or sidewalks;
- ▶ in front of driveways;
- ▶ within areas where parking is prohibited by curbs painted yellow or No Parking signs;

- in a parking space reserved for disabled persons;
 - ▶ on the hard surface of a road when no curb is present;
 - ▶ within 15 feet of a fire hydrant;
 - ▶ within 20 feet of an intersection;
 - ▶ within 15 feet of the entrance to a fire, ambulance or rescue squad station;
 - ▶ within 500 feet of where fire trucks or equipment are stopped answering an alarm;
 - ▶ within 50 feet of a railroad crossing; or,
 - ▶ in such a way that you block or create a hazard for other vehicles in a designated traffic lane.
- ▶ **Exchange information** with other people involved in the crash as soon as possible. Be sure to get the following information:
 - ▶ name, address and driver's license number of other drivers;
 - ▶ license plate numbers of other vehicles;
 - ▶ name and address of anyone who was injured;
 - ▶ name and address of each witness;
 - ▶ name, address and insurance policy number of other vehicle owners.
 - ▶ **Notify** your insurance company immediately.

Traffic Crashes

If you are involved in a traffic crash, you must:

- ▶ **Stop** at the scene of the crash or as close to the scene as possible without blocking traffic. You may move the vehicles before the police arrive if the vehicles create a traffic hazard.
- ▶ **Give any help** you can if someone is injured. Do not attempt to move an injured person from a wrecked vehicle unless you have the necessary medical training or there is an immediate danger such as fire.
- ▶ **Report the crash** to the police as quickly as possible. Motor vehicle crashes involving property damage, personal injury or death must be reported to the police.

Law enforcement officers are required to forward a written crash report to DMV when a traffic crash results in injury or the death of any person or total property damage in excess of \$1,000. All crash information will be recorded on the DMV records of each driver involved in the crash.

You must make a reasonable effort to find the owner of an unattended vehicle or other property damaged in a crash. If you cannot locate anyone, leave a note that can be found easily at the scene of the crash. Include your name, address, telephone number, driver's license number, the date and time of the crash and an estimate of the damage. You must also report the crash to the police within 24 hours.

Reading the Road

Pavement Markings

Road markings guide and warn drivers as well as regulate traffic. Markings may be either red, blue, yellow or white. They may be used alone or in combinations. Each has a different meaning.

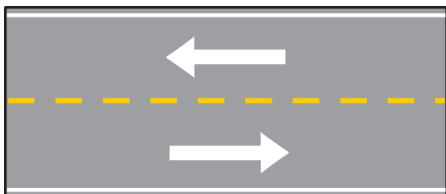
Red markings designate roadways that shall not be entered or used.

Section 2: Behind the Wheel...

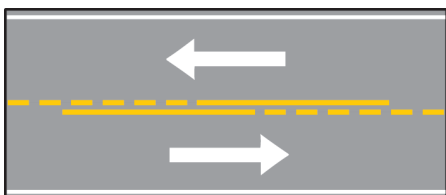
Blue markings designate parking spaces for persons with disabilities.

Yellow center lines indicate two-way traffic, flowing in opposite directions.

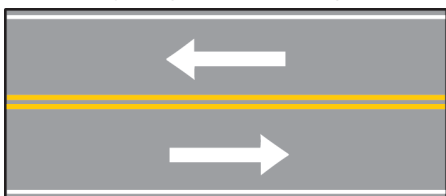
Broken yellow center lines indicate that passing on the left is permitted in either direction when the way ahead is clear.



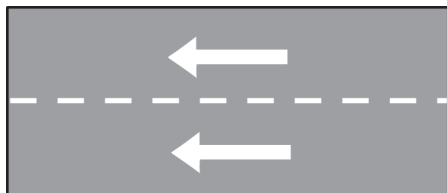
A broken yellow line alongside a solid yellow line indicates that passing is permitted on the side of the broken line, but not on the side of the solid line.



Double solid yellow lines mark the center of the road and separate oncoming traffic. Passing is not allowed in either direction. You may not cross the lines unless you are making a left turn.

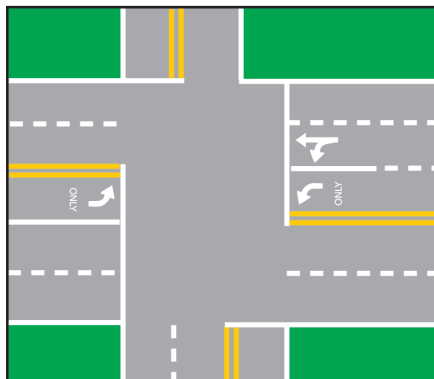


Broken white lines separate lanes of traffic going in the same direction. You may cross with caution.



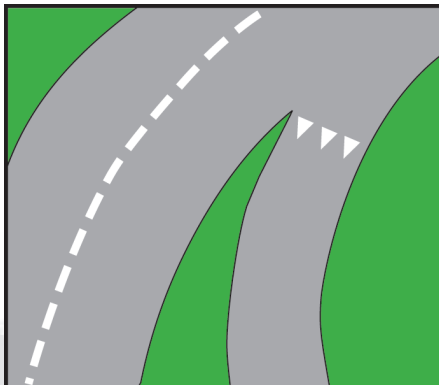
Many two-lane roads in Virginia do not have lane markings to separate the lanes. You may pass a slow moving vehicle on the left if there are no signs prohibiting passing. Make sure that the way is clear and observe the laws pertaining to passing. Refer to the passing information in this manual.

Solid white lines designate turn lanes and discourage lane changes near intersections and at other locations where lane changes might be dangerous. Solid white lines also mark the right edge of pavement. Arrows used with white lines indicate which turn may be made from the lane. Stop lines, crosswalks and parking spaces also are marked by white lines.



Yield ahead symbol is an outline of a triangle painted in the lane approaching a place where you must yield.

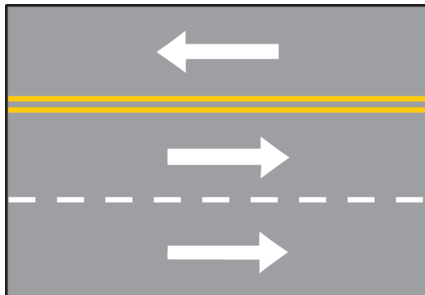
Yield line is a line of triangles extending across the roadway that may be used with a yield sign to show the point at which you must stop, if necessary, to yield to other traffic.



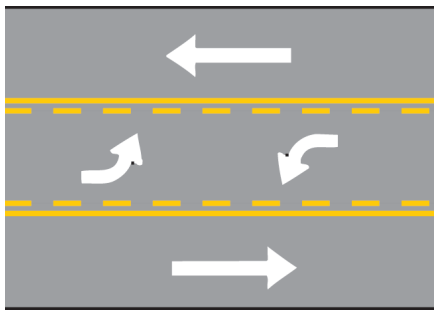
On three-lane roads with traffic moving in both directions, road markings indicate when drivers may use the center lane for making left turns or for passing.

If the center lane is marked by a single broken yellow line on both sides, motorists traveling in either direction may use the lane for passing.

If one side of the center lane is bounded by double solid yellow lines, drivers traveling next to the double yellow lines in either direction may not cross them except to make a left turn.



If both sides of the center lane are marked by a solid yellow line and a broken yellow line, drivers traveling in either direction may use the lane for making left turns. However, they may not travel further than 150 feet in this lane.



If you are in a lane marked with a curved arrow or a curved arrow and the word **ONLY**, you must turn in the direction of the arrow. If your lane is marked with both a curved and straight arrow, you may either turn or go straight.



High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes are designated on highways by a diamond-shaped

marking in the center of the lane. HOV lanes may also be special lanes separated by a barrier. During heavy traffic periods, HOV lanes are reserved for buses, vanpools, carpools, motorcycles, other high occupancy vehicles, and certain alternative fuel vehicles. Road signs indicate the minimum number of passengers a vehicle must carry (excluding motorcycles and alternative fuel vehicles) to use the HOV lanes and the times that HOV restrictions are in effect. If the lanes are separated by a barrier, they are reversible. This means that during certain times of the day, traffic flows one way. During other times of the day, traffic flows in the opposite direction. This diamond-shaped marking may also indicate that the lane is reserved for use as a bike lane or bus lane.

Painted Curbs

A painted curb means that you must follow special rules to park there. Check with the local jurisdiction for specific meanings. Generally, the colors on the curb mean:

White

Stop only long enough to pick up or drop off passengers.

Yellow

Stop only long enough to load or unload. Stay with your car.

Red

Do not stop, stand or park.

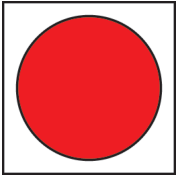
Blue

Parking is reserved for persons with disabilities.

Section 2: Behind the Wheel...

Traffic Signals

Traffic signals apply to drivers, motorcycle riders, bicyclists, moped-riders and pedestrians. You must obey the signals unless a police officer is directing traffic. It is unlawful to avoid a traffic signal, sign or control device by driving off the roadway and onto or across public or private property.



Stop--At a steady red light, come to a complete stop before you reach the intersection, stop line or crosswalk. Remain stopped as long as the light is red unless turns are allowed on red.



At a flashing red light, you must come to a complete stop and yield to oncoming traffic and/or pedestrians. You may go when the way is clear. At a railroad crossing, you must come to a complete stop even though the train is not present.

Right turn on red: At some intersections you may turn right while the traffic light is red. Before turning, you must come to a complete stop. Look both ways and yield the right-of-way to pedestrians and other traffic. Be sure to check for less visible vehicles such as bicycles and mopeds. Regardless of traffic conditions, you may not turn right if signs are posted at the intersection which read "No Turn on Red."

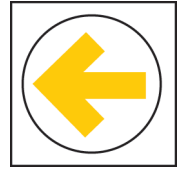
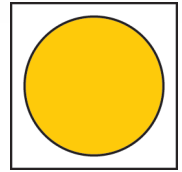
Left turn on red: You may turn left at a red light if you are on a one-way street and turning left onto another one-way street. Come to a complete stop and proceed with caution. You may not turn while the light is red if a sign prohibits it. You must yield to all oncoming traffic and pedestrians.

Note: If you are traveling in another state, make sure you know their laws for right turns and left turns on red.

Some states prohibit right and left turns on red at red arrow lights unless a sign is posted permitting these turns.



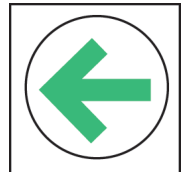
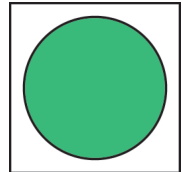
Caution--a steady yellow light or arrow warns that the light is about to change. If you have not entered the intersection, you should come to a stop. If you are already in the intersection, continue moving in order to clear it. Speeding up to beat the light could cause a crash.



At a flashing yellow light, slow down and proceed with caution. You'll find flashing yellow lights at locations with higher-than-normal hazard conditions.



Go--At a green light you may proceed in the direction indicated by the signal or arrow if the roadway is clear. If you are turning, you must yield the right-of-way to oncoming vehicles or pedestrians in the intersection.



Lane Use Signals

Lane use signals indicate lanes where you can and cannot drive during different hours of the day. These signals are used frequently to reverse a lane's direction. They provide additional lanes for heavy early morning traffic and evening traffic.

Red X

Never drive in a lane marked with a red X signal.



Yellow X

A steady yellow X signal means that you should move out of the lane as soon as safely possible.





Green Arrow

You are permitted to drive in a lane marked with a green arrow signal.



Steady White 2-Way Left Turn Arrows

Two-way left turn arrows mean you may use the lane for a left turn; however, vehicles coming from the other direction may also use the same lane for left-turning.



Steady White Left Turn Arrow

A steady white arrow indicates that you may use the lane for a left turn. (No vehicles coming from the opposite direction may use the same lane for left-turning.)

Traffic Signs

Sign Shapes

The shape of a traffic sign communicates important information about the sign's message. In poor visibility conditions, such as heavy fog, you may be able to make out only the shape of a sign. Part one of DMV's driver licensing knowledge exam consists of a 10-question test on traffic signs. You must answer all ten questions correctly before you can take part two. The traffic sign questions are selected from the following information.



Octagon: Stop

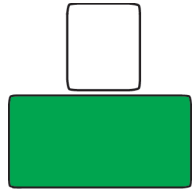
The octagon (eight-sided) shape always means stop. You must come to a complete stop at the sign, stop line, pedestrian crosswalk or curb. Then, yield the right-of-way to any vehicle or pedestrian approaching from either direction.



At some intersections you'll find a plaque beneath the stop sign that says "All Way" or "4 Way." At these intersections all vehicles on all roads leading into the intersection must stop. The driver on the left must yield to the driver on the right.

Triangle: Yield

Slow down to a speed reasonable for the conditions and yield the right-of-way. Stop if necessary.



Rectangle: Regulatory or Guide

Vertical signs generally give instructions or tell you the law. Horizontal signs may give directions or information.

Diamond: Warning

These signs warn you of special conditions or hazards ahead. Drive with caution and be ready to slow down. (Pedestrian and bicycle signs may also be displayed in fluorescent yellow-green.)



Pentagon: School Zone and School Crossing

The pentagon (five-sided) shape marks school zones and warns you about school crossings. Signs may display horizontal lines indicating the point at which a crosswalk exists.



Signs may have a separate downward-pointing arrow plaque which indicates the actual location of the crosswalk. (Signs may also be displayed in yellow-gold.)

Crossbuck and Circle: Railroad Crossing

Both of these signs indicate that you are approaching a railroad crossing. Slow down, look and listen for trains.



Section 2: Behind the Wheel...

Regulatory Signs

These signs inform you of the law; therefore, you must obey their instructions. Remember that a red circle with a slash means NO—the symbol inside the circle tells you what is prohibited.



Speed Limit

This indicates the maximum legal speed that you may travel on the road where this sign is posted assuming weather conditions are favorable. During rain, snow and ice, you may receive a ticket for overdriving the conditions even if you are driving at or less than the posted speed limit.



Do Not Enter -- Wrong Way

These signs are used often in combination and identify a one-way street, expressway ramp or the wrong direction or wrong side of a divided highway. Do not drive past either of these signs -- turn around.



One Way

Traffic flows only in the direction of the arrow.



No Left Turn

Left turns and U-turns prohibited. In Virginia U-turns are considered as two left turns and are prohibited if this sign is posted.



No Right Turn

Right turns prohibited.



No U-Turn

U-turns prohibited.

No Turn on Red

You may not turn during the red light. Wait for the signal to turn green.



No Passing

This sign marks the beginning of a no passing zone. You may not pass cars ahead of you in your lane.



Left Turn Yield on Green

This sign is used in combination with a traffic signal. It emphasizes that traffic turning left on the circular green light does not have the right-of-way and must yield to oncoming traffic.



Keep Right

A traffic island, median or obstruction is ahead. Keep to the side indicated by the arrow.



Lane-Use Control

These signs are used where turning movements are required or where special turning movements are permitted for specific lanes.





High Occupancy Vehicle

Indicates lanes reserved for buses and vehicles with the minimum number of occupants specified on the sign.



Disabled Parking

Parking spaces marked with these signs are reserved for individuals with disabled parking privileges.

Warning Signs

Warning signs alert you to possible hazards ahead. Slow down and watch for other signs or signals that may follow.



Advisory Speed

Indicates the maximum safe speed for an entrance or exit on the expressway.



Signal Ahead

Traffic signals are ahead. Slow down and be ready to stop.



No Passing

This sign marks the beginning of a no passing zone. You may not pass cars ahead of you in your lane.



Merge

Two lanes of traffic are about to become one. Drivers in both lanes are responsible for merging smoothly.

Lane Reduction

The right lane ends soon. Drivers in the right lane must merge left when space opens up. Drivers in the left lane should allow other vehicles to merge smoothly.



Divided Highway Begins

The highway ahead is split into two separate roadways by a median or divider and each roadway is one-way. Keep right.



Divided Highway Ends

The highway ahead becomes a single roadway with traffic going in both directions. Keep right.



Slippery When Wet

When pavement is wet, reduce your speed. Do not brake hard or change direction suddenly. Increase the distance between your car and the one ahead. These actions are needed on all wet roads and especially on roads where this sign is posted.



Low Clearance Sign

The overpass ahead has a low clearance. Do not proceed if your vehicle is taller than the height indicated on the sign.



Hill

A steep grade is ahead. Check your brakes.



Low Ground Railroad Crossing

Steep grade adjoining railroad bed may create a hang-up situation for vehicles with low ground clearance and a long wheel-base.



Deer Crossing

Deer regularly cross the highway in this area. Slow down and be ready to stop.



Section 2: Behind the Wheel...



Pedestrian Crossing

Watch for people crossing your path. Be prepared to slow down and stop. Signs may display horizontal lines indicating the point where a crosswalk exists. Signs may have a separate downward-pointing arrow plaque which

indicates the actual location of the crosswalk.



Bicycle Crossing/Bike Path

Bicycles regularly cross or ride beside traffic in this area. Drive with caution. Signs may have a separate downward-pointing arrow plaque which indicates the actual location of bike crossing. (Signs may also be displayed in yellow-gold.)



School Zone -- School Crossing

Slow down -- the speed limit is usually 25 MPH. Watch out for children crossing the street or playing. Be ready to stop. Obey signals from any crossing guards. Signs may

display horizontal lines indicating the point where a crosswalk exists. Signs may have a separate downward-pointing arrow plaque which indicates the actual location of the crosswalk. (Signs may also be displayed in yellow-gold.)



Open Joints

Slow down—open section joints on bridges or ramps could be of sufficient size to cause rider to lose control of motorcycle.



Expansion Joints

Used when a joint across lanes creates a significant bump or is wide enough to cause loss of traction in wet weather.

Crossroad

A four-way intersection is ahead. Watch for cross-traffic. Be ready to yield the right-of-way.



Side Road

A road joins from the right. Be alert for vehicles entering the roadway you are traveling on.



Y Intersection

You must bear either right or left ahead.



T Intersection

The roadway you are traveling on ends ahead. Signal before turning right or left.



Right Curve/Side Road

The road ahead curves right and a side road joins from the left within the curve. Be alert for vehicles entering the roadway you are traveling.



Sharp Right Turn

Be prepared for a sharp turn to the right in the road ahead.



Sharp Right and Left Turns

The road ahead turns sharply right, then left.



Right and Left Curves

The road ahead curves right, then left.





Right Curve (with safe speed indicator)

The road ahead curves right. Slow down to the safe speed indicated.



Winding Road

The road ahead winds with a series of turns or curves.

On all curves, slow down for better control.

Many localities and the Virginia Department of Transportation use electronic message boards mounted above the roadway or on the shoulder of the road to indicate hazardous driving conditions ahead (such as crashes, delays or road construction). Watch for these messages and obey the warning.



Rough Road, Bump, or Uneven Lanes

Used when certain road conditions, such as gravel or milled pavement, affect the roadway surface and create potentially difficult conditions for motorists, especially motorcyclists.



Work Zone Devices

The lives of highway construction workers depend on drivers like you obeying the posted speed limits in work zones. If you are convicted of exceeding the speed limit in a highway work zone, you may be fined up to \$500. Remember, the color orange marks a work zone and means slow down.



Road Construction Ahead/Detour

These signs indicate unusual or potentially dangerous conditions and guide drivers along a different route.



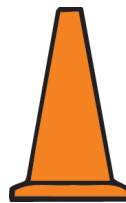
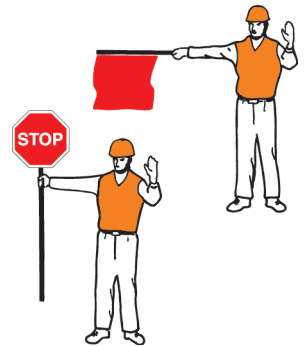
Flashing Arrow Panels

Large flashing arrow panels or flashing message signs in work zones guide drivers into designated traffic lanes and inform them that part of the road ahead is closed.



Flaggers

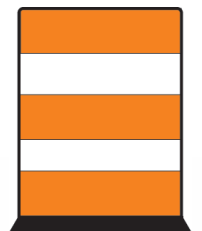
Flaggers normally wear orange or yellow vests, yellow-green shirts or jackets. They use STOP/SLOW paddles and red flags to direct traffic through the work zone and to let workers or construction vehicles cross the road.



Channelizing Devices

Barricades, vertical panels, concrete barriers, drums and cones are the most common devices used to guide drivers safely through work zones.

When driving near the devices, keep your vehicle in the middle of the lane and obey the posted speed limit. As you leave the work zone, stay in your lane and maintain your speed. Don't change lanes until you are completely clear of the work zone.



Railroad Crossings



Railroad Crossing Sign

Advance warning signs are placed before the crossing. These signs warn you to look, listen, slow down and be prepared to stop.



Railroad Crossbuck

If there is more than one track, the sign below the crossbuck will indicate the number of tracks at the crossing. Slow down and be prepared to stop.

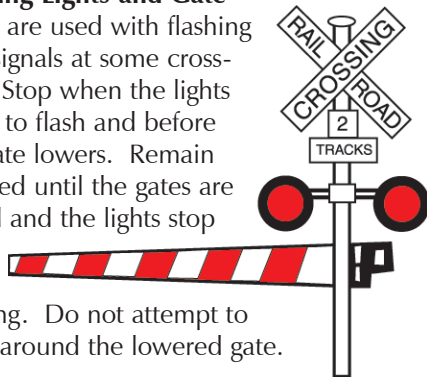


Railroad Crossbuck and Flashing Lights

Flashing lights may be used with crossbuck signs. Always stop when the light begins to flash and be alert for approaching trains. Do not proceed until all trains have passed, the tracks are clear, and the lights are no longer flashing. Be especially alert at multi-track crossings because a second train could be approaching from the opposite direction.

Crossbuck, Flashing Lights and Gate

Gates are used with flashing light signals at some crossings. Stop when the lights begin to flash and before the gate lowers. Remain stopped until the gates are raised and the lights stop



flashing. Do not attempt to drive around the lowered gate.

Pavement markings, consisting of an X and RR, may be painted on the pavement at the approach to some crossings.

When approaching railroad tracks, be alert. Trains may approach the crossing at any time and from either direction. Never start across the tracks unless there is room for your vehicle on the other side. Don't cross the tracks until the vehicle ahead of you is completely off the tracks.

If a dangerous condition exists at a highway rail crossing, call the number listed on the emergency notification sign. This will allow the rail company to stop or reroute approaching rail traffic until the hazard is removed. Be sure to give the DOT crossing number so that the hazard can be identified correctly.

TO REPORT STALLED
VEHICLE ON TRACKS OR
OTHER EMERGENCY
CALL 1-XXX-XXX-XXXX
AND REFER TO
CROSSING #XXX-XXXX
ON STREETNAME RD

If your car stalls on the tracks, don't hesitate. Get out of the car and run diagonally away from the tracks in the direction of the oncoming train.



Message Boards

You may see portable or permanent message boards along the highway. They may provide information about traffic, road, weather or other hazardous conditions. Always obey any directions posted on these message boards. For information about road conditions or road construction, visit the VDOT web site at www.virginiadot.org.

Slow Moving Vehicle

Slow Moving Vehicle

Vehicles which travel at 25 MPH or less—such as farm equipment and horse-drawn vehicles—must display these emblems when using a public highway. Be prepared to adjust your speed or position when you see a vehicle with one of these placards.



Index

Acceptable documents.....	9	Drivers with disabilities.....	3, 15
Addresses.....	8	Driving records.....	14
Address change.....	13	Driving under the influence.....	30
Administrative license suspension (ALS).....	30	Drugs and driving.....	32
Aggressive driving	29	DUI.....	30
Air bags.....	20	Eligibility to obtain a Virginia driver's license.....	13
Alcohol and you.....	31	Emergency vehicles.....	34
Applying to register to vote.....	6	Exchanging your out-of-state license.....	4
Avoiding the risks.....	32	Fees.....	11
BAC.....	30	First-time drivers.....	1
Backing.....	27	Flaggers.....	45
Before you get behind the wheel.....	19	Flashing arrow panels.....	45
Bicyclists.....	23	Fog.....	28
Bioptic telescopic lenses.....	11	Four-way intersection.....	34, 41
Blind spots.....	23, 25	Getting your first license.....	3
Blood alcohol content.....	30	Green traffic signals.....	40
Braking distance.....	33	Hand signals.....	29
Broken lines.....	38, 39	Hazardous conditions.....	27
Buckle up.....	20	Headlights.....	28
Caution.....	40	High occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes.....	39, 43
CDL.....	6..	ID card.....	7
Cell phones.....	30	Identity, proof of.....	8
Changing lanes.....	26	Implied consent laws.....	31
Channelizing devices.....	45	Insurance.....	5, 20
Circular Intersections.....	36	International driver's license.....	7
Child safety seats.....	21	Intersections.....	34, 35
Commercial driver's license.....	6	Knowledge exam.....	10
Construction and maintenance devices.....	45	Lane use signals.....	40
Crashes.....	37	Learner's permit.....	2, 3, 8
Crossbuck and circle.....	41, 46	Left turn on red.....	40
Curfew restrictions.....	3	License address.....	8
Diamond.....	41	Licensing ceremony.....	3
Disabled parking privileges.....	16	Lights.....	28
Double lines.....	38	Maintaining a space cushion.....	25
Drinking and driving.....	30	Message boards.....	46
Driver education requirements.....	2		
Driver's license.....	7		
Driver's license replacement.....	13		
Driver's license expiration.....	12		
Driver's license suspension or revocation.....	17		

Index

Military and diplomatic extensions.....	13	School bus endorsement.....	6
Military personnel.....	4	Selective service registration.....	3
Mirrors.....	23	Services for drivers with disabilities.....	15
Mopeds.....	23	Sharing the road.....	23
Motorcycle driver's license.....	6	Sign shapes.....	41
Motorcycle learner's permit.....	6	Slow moving vehicle.....	46
Name change.....	13, 14	Snow.....	28
New residents.....	4, 5	Social security number, proof of.....	8
Night driving.....	27	Solid lines.....	38, 39
No-Zones.....	25	Space cushion.....	25
Non-residents.....	4	Special restrictions.....	3
Octagon.....	41	Speed limits.....	32
Open container.....	30	Stopping.....	33
Organ/tissue donation.....	5	Stop signs.....	41
Out-of-state students.....	4	Sun shading.....	20
Painted curbs.....	39	Test questions.....	10
Parental consent.....	1, 3	Three-lane roads.....	39
Parking.....	36	Traffic crashes.....	37
Passenger restrictions.....	3	Traffic signals.....	40
Passing.....	26	Traffic signs.....	41
Pavement markings.....	37	Trailers.....	25
Pedestrians.....	23	Trucks.....	25
Pentagon.....	41	Tips for traveling with children.....	21
Photo ID card.....	7	Triangle.....	41
Proof of identity.....	8	Turn signals.....	29
Proof of legal presence.....	9	Turns on red.....	40, 42
Proof of name change.....	14	Two-lane roads.....	38
Proof of residency.....	9	Three-second rule.....	22
Proof of social security number.....	8	Types of driver's licenses.....	6
Radar detectors.....	32	U-turns.....	36
Railroad crossings.....	41, 46	Unattended vehicles.....	37
Rain.....	28	Uninsured motor vehicle fee.....	19
Reaction distance.....	33	Vehicle impoundment.....	31
Recreational vehicles.....	25	Visibility.....	22, 27
Rectangle.....	41	Vision screening.....	11
Red traffic signals.....	40	Warning signs.....	43, 45
Regulatory signs.....	42, 43	White lines.....	38
Residency, proof of.....	9	Window tinting.....	20
Revocation & suspension.....	17	Work zones.....	45
Right-of-way.....	34	Yellow lines.....	38, 39
Right turn on red.....	40	Yellow traffic signals.....	40
Road skills test.....	10	Yield.....	34, 35, 41
Safety belts.....	20	Yield line.....	38
Scanning.....	22	Zero tolerance.....	30
School buses.....	35		

Virginia Traffic Laws at a Glance

- ▶ Virginia license plates must be displayed on the vehicle so that all wording, numbers and decals are completely visible and readable.
- ▶ You must use your headlights during inclement weather, or whenever you use your windshield wipers.
- ▶ You must signal before you change lanes, make a turn or pull in front of another vehicle.
- ▶ Radar detectors and radar jamming devices are illegal in Virginia. Mobile infrared transmitters that change traffic lights are also illegal.
- ▶ It is unlawful to operate a motor vehicle, moped or bicycle on Virginia roadways while using earphones or headphones in both ears.
- ▶ Bicycles are considered vehicles and have the same rights-of-way as motor vehicles; bicycles must also yield the same rights-of-way as motor vehicles.
- ▶ If you change your address, you must notify DMV of your new address within 30 days.
- ▶ All children under age six must be properly secured in an approved child safety seat or booster seat.
- ▶ All children age six through 15 must be properly secured in an approved child safety seat, booster seat or safety belt no matter where the child is seated in the vehicle. It is unlawful for persons under age 16 to travel in the bed of a pick-up truck.
- ▶ The driver and front-seat passenger must wear safety belts.
- ▶ If traffic lights are not working at an intersection, the driver on the left must yield to the driver on the right.
- ▶ Do not cut through, join, or interfere with a funeral procession. You must yield the right-of-way to the procession.
- ▶ Pull to the curb and yield the right-of-way to all approaching emergency vehicles. When approaching a stopped emergency vehicle, you must change lanes or proceed with caution.
- ▶ Never drink or use drugs and drive.
- ▶ Failure to pay any motor vehicle-related or other court fine can result in suspension of your driver's license.
- ▶ Failure to pay the local vehicle license fee or personal property tax will prohibit you from renewing your vehicle registration(s).
- ▶ Virginia's DUI laws apply to the operation of mopeds on public highways.
- ▶ It's unlawful to watch television, a motion picture or similar video display while driving. Television monitors must not be placed within the driver's view.
- ▶ Metal mesh utility trailers that do not require state inspections must have two or more reflectors or 100 square inches of reflective tape on the rear of the trailer. Reflectors or tape must outline the rear end of the trailer.
- ▶ Drive away without paying for gas and you could lose your driver's license and receive a fine of up to \$250.
- ▶ In Virginia, while you maintain a Virginia registration of a vehicle, you must have insurance for that vehicle—even if it cannot be operated. If you cancel the insurance on a vehicle, the license plates must be returned to DMV immediately.

If you are stopped by a police officer...

- ▶ Pull off to the right side of the roadway. Position your vehicle as far away from traffic as possible.
- ▶ Turn on your flashers.
- ▶ Turn off your engine, radio and any other device that could hinder communication with the officer.
- ▶ Roll down your window so that you can communicate with the officer.
- ▶ Remain calm.
- ▶ Keep your safety belt fastened and ask your passengers to keep their belts fastened.
- ▶ Stay in your vehicle. Do not get out unless the officer asks you to.
- ▶ Keep your hands in plain view, preferably on the steering wheel. Ask your passengers to keep their hands in plain view also.
- ▶ Do not make any movement that will make the officer think you are hiding or reaching for something.
- ▶ Carry proper identification: a valid driver's license, proof of vehicle registration and proof of insurance. If the officer asks for these documents, tell him or her where they are and reach for them slowly, keeping one hand on the steering wheel.
- ▶ If the officer is driving an unmarked car or is not in uniform, ask to see his or her identification.
- ▶ Answer the officer's questions fully and clearly. If you don't understand something, ask the officer questions calmly and politely.
- ▶ If the officer issues you a citation, do not argue with the officer about the citation. You will have your chance to make your case when you go to court.
- ▶ You will be asked to sign the citation. This is not an admission of guilt. Refusal to sign the citation, however, may result in your arrest. Or, you may be required to go to the station to post collateral and pay for the offense.



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DMV accepts these major credit cards.



This manual is an informational tool. It does not supercede the Code of Virginia, Virginia Administrative Code or any other statute. To view Virginia's motor vehicle laws, refer to the Virginia Code, Title 46.2.